THE
EASTERN BUDDHIST

BUDDHIST, ESPECIALLY ZEN, CONTRIBUTIONS TO JAPANESE CULTURE[1]

Buddhism was introduced to Japan officially in 552 A. D., and ever since it has kept up a most intimate and vital relationship with the cultural history of the nation. In fact, every page of it records something achieved by Buddhism for the enhancement of the intellectual, the esthetic, and the spiritual life of the Japanese. This was quite natural seeing that at the time of its introduction to Japan Buddhism represented a superior civilisation. It was backed by such highly advanced cultures as Indian, Chinese, and Korean in the arts, industries, learning, and humane activities. They were then far ahead of Japan. Not only as a far-sighted statesman and a highly-endowed mind, but as a deeply-devotional soul, Prince Shōtoku (573–621), worked like a genius to create a new Japan by building Buddhist temples, writing commentaries on the Mahayana Sutras, encouraging the arts, sending students to China, establishing hospitals and universities, laying down the principles of government, etc. Buddhism, besides being a great religious system, was then the source of wisdom for every department of human activities. Those who have already visited Nara and its vicinity will fully understand what I mean by these statements.

But as I have a very limited time at my disposal I cannot describe the whole field of Buddhist contributions to the culture of the Japanese people. Let me, therefore, confine myself to what Buddhism, especially Zen Buddhism, has done towards their intellectual and artistic life—and this very briefly.

[1] This paper is based on the author's lectures delivered at the summer school of Oriental culture for foreigners in Kyoto, 1931.

1

To do this, it is necessary to understand first what kind of Buddhism it was that came over to Japan after centuries of its development on the continent.

We generally distinguish between Hinayana Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism. Historically, the Hinayana is the more primitive form of Buddhism, and the Mahayana is a later and more advanced system of it. What characterises each may most briefly be defined thus: the ideal of the Hinayana discipline is to realise Arhatship, while that of the Mahayana is Bodhisattvahood.

The Buddhist life generally aims at attaining enlightenment, technically known as "Bodhi". In this, Hinayanists as well as Mahayanists are one, but with the former there are no conscious efforts to impart the bliss of enlightenment to all other fellow-beings—if necessary, unconditionally. A Hinayanist remains satisfied if he is enlightened by his own untiring efforts. Of course he is full of missionary spirit trying to convert his pupils or people generally into his own way of thinking and feeling, that is, to make them embrace the teaching and follow the discipline of Buddhism. But all he does for others is more or less intellectual. If others fail to come up to the standard, the moral law of cause and effect follows, and if they cannot attain what they seek, they fall short of being enlightened. The Hinayanist cannot, however, help them, for each has to achieve his own salvation—this being the view held by the Hinayana school of Buddhism. The Arhat is a solitary philosopher, he is absorbed all by himself in the bliss of enlightenment. He lacks in human sympathy and all-embracing love. When he sees sufferings about him he coldly looks at them and will tell the sufferers how to contrive by their own efforts to get out of the tribulation, and this is all he does and can do for others; he cannot do anything more for them; each reaps what he sows. The Arhat or Hinayanist is an ultra-individualist.

The Mahayana ideal differs from this. The love-phase

of religious life is more emphasised here than its rationalism. In order that his fellow-beings may increase or grow stronger in their spiritual power, the Bodhisattva wishes to extend towards them whatever merit he has acquired by his moral life. Although he is morally all ready for it, he will even postpone his own enlightenment. He does this because he knows that there are yet many suffering beings whom he feels he ought to wake up to enlightenment. However strong the chain of individual karma may be, the Bodhisattva's whole-souled endeavour is to break it in pieces. For by this, he can achieve a grand scheme of universal enlightenment and the salvation of entire humankind. (In Buddhism salvation is not confined to human beings, it extends over all creation. Even animals, plants, rivers, rocks, mountains are included in the scheme of salvation, that is, in the attainment of Buddhahood.)

Bodhisattva was originally the name given to the Buddha prior to his attainment of enlightenment while he was practising the six virtues of perfection (*pāramitā*). The Mahayana places great stress upon this stage of the Buddha's life. The practising of the Paramitas means the assertion of humanity as a social being, the basic idea being that individuals cannot be perfect until society itself is made perfect. This will naturally mean that an individual becomes perfect when he loses his individuality in the all to which he belongs. By losing himself he gains something more than himself, for his perfection consists in being more than himself and not in being just what he is in himself.

The six virtues of perfection are characteristic of Mahayana Buddhism in many ways. They contain virtues commonly held up as cardinal by all religious systems, but there are some more which differentiate the Mahayana.

The six virtues are:

1. Charity (*dāna*)—This does not merely mean to give away what one has in abundance, but involves even the giving-up of one's whole being.

2. Morality (*śīla*)—The practising of all the Buddhist precepts, or all the virtuous deeds that are conducive to the moral welfare of oneself and that of others.

3. Striving (*vīrya*)—A constant application of oneself to the promotion of good. The Mahayanist's life is one of utmost strenuousness not only in this life but in the lives to come—and the lives to come may have no end.

4. Humility (*kshānti*)—This is sometimes rendered patience, but humility is more to the point. Rather than merely enduring all sorts of ills of the flesh, it is the feeling of unworthiness, limitedness, and sinfulness.

5. Meditation (*dhyāna*)—Not in the sense of meditating on a moral maxim or a philosophical saying, but the disciplining of oneself in tranquillisation.

6. Transcendental knowledge (*prajñā*)—This is what constitutes enlightenment, it is an intuition into the ultimate truth of things, by gaining which one is released from the bondage of existence, and becomes master of one's self.

2

Let us next see on what theoretical ground Mahayana Buddhism stands. The doctrine of Non-ego (*anatta* in Pali, *anātman* in Sanskrit) is the foundation of both Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism, but the latter has developed all the implications ending finally in the dogma of the Law-body, or Dharmakāya as is better known in its Sanskrit original, for "Law-body" is liable to be wrongly interpreted.

To understand adequately the Mahayana conception of Dharmakāya requires a great deal of knowledge as regards the philosophy of Buddhism; for the Dharmakāya is one of the Triple Body and its significance is organically related to the other two Bodies called Sambhogakāya and Nirmāna-kāya, or Body of Enjoyment and Body of Transformation. Briefly, the Dharmakāya is the final reality making up the being of all things; this is what is popularly misconceived as an ego-substance.

Psychologically, the Dharmakāya may be regarded as the Ālayavijñāna, "all-conserving mind", of which Buddhism talks so much. The Alayavijñāna is something akin to what may be called transcendental or universal consciousness which lies behind our ordinary relative empirical consciousnesses. The purification of this universal consciousness, where all things are conserved in their essence or in their seed-form (*bīja*)—the purification taking place through its individually manifested consciousnesses is the aim of all Buddhist discipline.

From another point of view the Ālayavijñāna is Emptiness (*śūnyatā*). If Ālayavijñāna is a psychological term, Śūnyatā is an ontological conception, or would it be better to consider it epistemologically? Because when the notion of logical relativity is to be finally transcended in order to reach something ultimate, the human intellect inevitably comes to Emptiness. So long as Emptiness is conceived relatively we cannot go beyond logic, and logic is not something in which the soul finds its abode of rest. Emptiness or the Empty must be after all our last shelter. But we must remember that Emptiness does not mean mere nothingness.

Emptiness is, however, a word greatly abused, suffering all kinds of maltreatment. Mahayana Buddhism has another term with an affirmative connotation. I mean "Suchness" or "Thusness" (*tathatā* in Sanskrit). The Mahayanists would thus describe existence to be in a state of Suchness and they insist that as it is not so perceived, the result is a state of ignorance from which follow prejudices and passions in all their possible complications. To regard existence as this or that, as being or non-being, as eternal or transient, is our thought-construction and not reality as it is in itself. It requires the highest degree of intellectual perspicuity to look into reality in its suchness and not to weave around it subjectively-constructed meshes. This is then a realm of intuitions. When we enter into this realm, we realise what Suchness really means.

All these highly philosophical ideas are difficult for many people to grasp intelligently. All those European scholars of Buddhism who are trying hard to get into its profound concepts often fail to perceive, especially the meaning of "Emptiness" and "Suchness". One of the commonest criticisms against Buddhism is that it teaches nihilism or negativism as it denies existence. Superficially this is true. Emptiness seems to be the negation of existence. But what is taught by Buddhism is to go even beyond this negation, for this is where there is really what is known as Emptiness; and when we get into this world Emptiness is grasped, as it is after all graspable though not in the relative sense. And when this is grasped, this world of particular objects is accepted in its proper signification. When a Zen master was asked, "What is the Way?", meaning the ultimate truth of Buddhism, he said, "What a fine mountain this is!" referring to the mountain where he had his retreat.

The questioner said, "I am not asking you about the mountain, but about the Way."

"As long as you cannot go beyond the mountain, you cannot reach the Way," replied the master.

Another time the same master was asked about the Way, and he said, "It lies right before your eyes."

"Why do I not see it myself?"

"You do not, because of your egoistic notion."

"If I do not, because of my egoistic notion, do you, O master?"

"So long as you have dualistic views, saying 'I don't' and 'you do' and so on, your eyes are bedimmed by this relativity view."

"When there is neither 'I' nor 'you', can one see it?"

"When there is neither 'I' nor 'you' who is it that wants to see?"

I may comment on this conclusion of the master: just because there is no one wanting to see what the Way is, this mountain is a quiet retreat for the monks, and these wild

flowers are blooming fine even if no city people come so far out to admire them.

Another criticism thrown upon Mahayana Buddhism is that it is pantheistic. When the Mahayanist sees the Buddha-nature in everything even in things inanimate, he seems to be pantheistically inclined in his philosophy. But read the following carefully and see where the whole trend of the discourse is:

A master was asked, "Is there the Buddha-nature in the dog?"

"Yes."

"In you too?"

"No, not in me."

"How is it that there is no Buddha-nature in you when all beings are endowed with one?"

"I am not one of 'all beings'."

"If you are not, are you Buddha himself?"

"I am not Buddha."

"What are you then?"

"I am not a 'what' either."

"Is it then something at all tangible or thinkable?"

"No, monk, it is altogether beyond thinkability, beyond comprehensibility. Therefore, it is called *acintya,* the unthinkable."

When we go over this dialogue carefully we will see that the Mahayanist sees something beyond individual realities, which cannot be wholly included in them, or that, according to the Mahayana, the Buddha-nature is manifested in every particular object—in the dog, in the plant, in a piece of rock, in a stream of water, in a particle of dust, in you, in me, in the ignorant, as well as in the Buddha; but at the same time it goes beyond them and cannot be grasped by our thought and imagination. This view of reality cannot be called pantheistic.

3

Tentatively, I give three means of realisation by which the Buddhists come to the Suchness-view of reality: 1. Practical, 2. Intellectual, and 3. Intuitional.

The practical method is followed by all the Buddhists; but the Shingon may explain my point more graphically. The method consists in arranging the environment in such a way as to make the mind harmoniously respond to the general atmosphere thus created; that is to say, the ear listens to a solemn air, the eye perceives the holy images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, the nose smells odours reminding of a heavenly kingdom, the hands are engaged in forming secret mudras, and the mouth repeats sacred mantrams of deep signification. When these arrangements are completed, the mind is naturally influenced by them, and, without realising how, becomes deeply permeated with the subtle *vāsanā* emanating from them. When this is repeated regularly for a certain space of time, the devotee may ultimately come to a realisation.

The second method of reaching the final goal of the Mahayana discipline is to appeal to the intellect. This is done by training one's self in the philosophy of the Avatamsaka school or in that of the Tendai. The Avatamsaka teaches a highly abstract system of the so-called fourfold Dharmadhātu, while the Tendai has the contemplation of the threefold view of existence known as Emptiness, Relativity, and the Middle Way. All these are meant for a highly developed and best trained intellect. Without many years of philosophic discipline, one could not comprehend the deep spiritual meaning therein involved.

The third method appealing to our intuitive faculty is Zen. Possibly the Nembutsu is classifiable under this head. This is a direct method, for it refuses to resort to verbal explanations, or logical analysis, or to ritualism. Whatever reality there is to take hold of, Zen proposes to grasp it directly without any mediatory tools such as intellection,

imagination, accumulation of merit, etc. It straightway awakens the highest spiritual power which may be called intuition, and by this enlightenment is attained.

It goes without saying that along with all these methods of spiritual training Dhyāna (meditation so called) is practised, for without this no amount of discipline whether intellectual or intuitive or ritualistic can produce the result desired. Wherever Buddhism is put into practical use, let us therefore understand that Dhyāna is the one thing indispensable to it. Only in Zen this is more systematically exercised; in fact, the practice of Dhyāna is regarded in Zen as the means essentially in correspondence with an ultimate realisation. Historically the term "Zen" comes from "Dhyāna" (*zenna* in Japanese).

Thus, of the three methods whereby to bring about a state of enlightenment in Buddhist life, Zen has so far proved the most practical and efficient generally to the Oriental mind. And besides as it has contributed much to the appreciation of a certain artistic taste in the life of the Japanese people. I will devote the rest of my lecture to Zen and its cultural value.

The Shingon knows how to appreciate the value of form and as the result it has helped much in the creation of beautiful objects of art. The Tendai, the Kegon (*avatamsaka*), and the Yuishiki (*vijñaptimātra*)—three of the intellectualist wing of Mahayana Buddhism—have no doubt stimulated the growth of the ratiocinative faculty; and when Japan faced the streaming-in of the Western thoughts, she knew well how to discriminate and assimilate it according to her needs. That she took in with the proper frame of mind the invasion of modern idealism and Hegelian dialectics is no doubt due to the fact that her intellect has been under a severe training in the hands of the Buddhist philosophers.

Strangely, Zen had its share in promoting the study of the Chinese classics. If Zen did not countenance the study of Buddhist philosophy as a hindrance to the growth of the

intuitive power, it acted as a missionary for Chinese learning in general, which included poetry, history, ethics, philosophy, calligraphy, painting, etc. This is an unusual phenomenon in the history of Buddhism, that a teaching which is so against the letter, became a strong efficient agency in the preservation and encouragement of scholarship.

4

In one sense, Zen is the Chinese interpretation of the doctrine of enlightenment. When Buddhism passed through the prism of the Chinese mind, it was differentiated into many schools with Zen as one of them. But it was evidently Zen that was in the best conformity with the Chinese psychology, for of all the Buddhist schools that flourished in that land during the twenty centuries of its growth Zen is one of the two currents of Buddhist thought which have successfully survived; indeed, as far as the official name of a school is concerned, Zen is the only school of Buddhism now in existence in China; for the Pure Land Teaching has never become a separate school in China, finding its shelter in the Zen monasteries as a sort of boarding guest.

Historically, Zen no doubt started with the coming of Bodhidharma to China early in the sixth century. But, as a matter of fact, Zen, properly to be so called, dates with the appearance of Yeno (Hui-nêng, 637–713 A. D.) who was a native of Southern China. The history of Zen from Bodhidharma down to Yeno, the sixth patriarch, is told in my *Essays in Zen Buddhism,* Series One.

Apart from its insistence in the all-absorbing importance of personal experience in the realisation of a final fact, Zen has the following characteristics which have exercised a great deal of moral influence in the moulding of what may be designated the spirit of the East, especially of Japan.

1. Neglect of form is generally characteristic of mysticism, Christian, or Buddhist, or Islamic. When the importance of the spirit is emphasised, all the outward expres-

sions of it naturally become things of secondary significance. Form is not necessarily despised, but attention to it is reduced to a minimum, or we may say that conventionalism is set aside and individual originality is asserted in its full strength. But because of this there is a forceful tone of inwardness perceivable in all things connected with Zen. As far as form is concerned, nothing beautiful or appealing to the senses may be observable here, but one feels something inward or spiritual asserting itself in spite of the imperfection of the form, perhaps because of this very imperfection. The reason is this: when the form is perfect, our senses are satisfied too strongly with it and the mind may at least temporarily neglect to exercise its more inner function. The efforts concentrated too greatly in the outwardness of things fail to draw out what innerism there is in them. So Tanka (Tan-hsia) burned a wooden image of Buddha to make a fire and idolatry was done away with. Kenshi (Hsien-tzŭ) turned into a fisherman against the conventionality of monastery life. Daitō Kokushi became a beggar and Kanzan Kokushi was a cowherd.

2. The inwardness of Zen implies the directness of its appeal to the human spirit. When the intermediary of form is dispensed with, one spirit speaks directly to another. Raise a finger and the whole universe is there. Nothing could be more direct than this in this world of relativity. The medium of communication or the symbol of self-expression is curtailed to the shortest possible term. When a syllable or a wink is enough, why spend one's entire life in writing huge books or building a grandiose cathedral?

3. Directness is thus another word for simplicity. When all the paraphernalia to express ideas are discarded, a single blade of grass suffices to stand for Buddha Vairochana sixteen feet high. Or a circle is the fullest possible symbol for the immeasurability of the truth as realised in the mind of a Zen adept. This simplicity also expresses itself in life. A humble straw-thatched mountain retreat, a

half of which is shared by white clouds, is enough for the sage. The potatoes roasted in the ashes of a cow-dung fire appease his hunger, as he casts a contemptuous look upon an envoy from the Imperial court.

4. Poverty and simplicity go hand in hand, but to be merely poor and humble is not Zen. It does not espouse poverty just for the sake of poverty. As it is sufficient with itself, it does not want much—which is poverty to others, but sufficiency to oneself. Rich and poor—this is a worldly standard; for the inwardness of Zen poverty does not always mean to be short of possessions and to be rich with the overflowing of material wealth.

5. Facts of experience are valued in Zen more than representations, symbols, and concepts, that is to say, substance is everything in Zen and form nothing. Therefore, Zen is radical empiricism. This being so, space is not something objectively extending, time is not to be considered a line stretched out as past, present, and future. Zen knows no such space, no such time, and, therefore, such ideas as eternity, infinitude, boundlessness, etc., are mere dreams to Zen. For Zen lives in facts. Facts may be considered momentary, but momentariness is an idea subjectively constructed. When Zen is compared to a flash of lightning which disappears even before you have uttered the cry "Oh!", it is not to be supposed that mere quickness is the life of Zen. But we can say that Zen eschews deliberation, elaboration. When a roof leaked, a Zen master called out to his attendants to bring in something to keep the tatami dry. Without a moment's hesitation, one of them brought in a bamboo basket, while another went around and searching for a tub took it to the master. The master was immensely pleased, it is said, with the first monk with the basket. It was he who understood the spirit of Zen better than the one who was deliberate though his wisdom proved far more practical and useful. This phase of Zen is technically known as "non-discrimination."

6. What might be designated "eternal loneliness" is found at the heart of Zen. This is a kind of sense of the absolute. In the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* we have what is known there as the "truth of solitude" (*viviktādharma* in Sanskrit). The experience of this seems to wake the feeling of eternal loneliness. This does not mean that we all feel solitary and long forever for something larger and stronger than ourselves. This feeling is cherished more or less by all religious souls; but what I mean here is not this kind of solitariness, but the solitariness of an absolute being, which comes upon one when a world of particulars moving under the conditions of space, time, and causation is left behind, when the spirit soars high up in the sky and moves about as it lists like a floating cloud.

7. When all these aspects of Zen are confirmed, we find a certain definite attitude of Zen towards life generally. When it expresses itself in art, it constitutes what may be called the spirit of Zen estheticism. In this we shall then find simplicity, directness, abandonment, boldness, aloofness, unworldliness, innerliness, the disregarding of form, free movements of spirit, the mystic breathing of a creative genius all over the work—whether it be painting, calligraphy, gardening, tea-ceremony, fencing, dancing, or poetry.

5

I have probably spent too much time on Zen. But as I said before, Zen, of all the schools of Mahayana Buddhism, has given great impetus to the cultivation of the arts peculiar to the Japanese, and the above delineation may help somehow to understand the spirit of this phase of Japanese culture. To illustrate, let me choose Japanese painting known as "Sumiye" and Japanese poetry called "Haiku".

Zen came to Japan in the twelfth century, and during the eight hundred years of its history it has influenced Japanese life in various ways not only in the spiritual life of the Samurai but in the artistic expressions of it by the learned

The Sumiye which is one of such expressions is not painting in the proper sense of the word, it is a kind of sketch in black and white. The ink is made of soot and glue, and the brush of sheep's or badger's hair, and the latter is so made as to absorb or contain much of the fluid. The paper used is rather thin and will absorb much ink, standing in great contrast to the canvas used by oil painters, and this contrast means a great deal to the Sumiye artist.

The reason why such a frail material has been chosen for the vehicle of transferring an artistic inspiration is that the inspiration is to be transferred onto it in the quickest possible time. If the brush lingers too long, the paper will be torn through. The lines are to be drawn as swiftly as possible and the fewest as well in number, only the absolutely necessary ones being indicated. No deliberation is allowed, no erasing, no repetition, no retouching, no remodelling, no "doctoring," no building-up. Once executed, the strokes are indelible, irrevovable, not subject to future corrections, or improvements. Anything done afterwards is plainly and painfully visible in the result, as the paper is of such a nature. The artist must follow his inspiration as spontaneously and absolutely and instantly as it moves, he just lets his arm, his fingers, his brush be guided by it as if they were all mere instruments, together with his whole being, in the hands of somebody else, who has temporarily taken possession of him. Or we may say that the brush by itself executes the work quite outside the artist, who just lets it move on without his conscious efforts. If any logic or reflection comes between brush and paper, the whole effect is spoiled. In this way Sumiye is produced.

It is easily conceivable that the lines of Sumiye must show an infinite variety. There is no chiaroscuro, no perspective in it. Indeed, they are not needed in Sumiye which makes no pretentions to realism. It attempts to make the spirit of an object move on the paper. Thus each brush stroke must beat with the pulsation of a living being. It

must be living too. Evidently, Sumiye is governed by a set of principles quite different from those of an oil-painting. The canvas being of such strong material and oil colours permitting repeated wipings and overlayings, a picture is built up systematically after a deliberately designed plan. Grandeur of conception and strength of execution, to say nothing of its realism, are the characteristics of an oil-painting, which can be compared to a well thought-out system of philosophy, each thread of whose logic is closely knitted; or it may be likened unto a grand cathedral, whose walls, pillars, and foundations are composed of solid blocks of stone. Compared with this, a Sumiye sketch is poverty itself, poor in form, poor in contents, poor in execution, poor in material, yet we Oriental people feel the presence in it of a certain moving spirit that mysteriously hovers around the lines, dots, and shades of various formations; the rhythm of its living breath vibrates in them. A single stem of a blooming lily apparently so carelessly executed on a piece of coarse paper—yet here is vividly revealed the tender innocent spirit of a maiden sheltered from the storm of a worldly life. Again, as far as a superficial critic can see, there is not much of artistic skill and inspiration—a little insignificant boat of a fisherman at the centre of a broad expanse of waters; but as we look we cannot help being deeply impressed with the immensity of the ocean which knows no boundaries, and with the presence of a mysterious spirit breathing a life of eternity undisturbed in the midst of the undulating waves. And all these wonders are achieved with such ease and effortlessness.

If Sumiye attempts to copy an objective reality, it is an utter failure; it never does that, it is rather a creation. A dot in a Sumiye sketch does not represent a hawk, nor does a curved line symbolise Mount Fuji. The dot is the bird and the line is the mountain. If resemblance is everything with a picture, the two dimensional canvas cannot represent anything of objectivity; the colours fall far too short

of giving the original, and however faithfully a painter may try with his brushes to remind us of an object of nature as it is, the result can never do justice to it; for as far as it is an imitation, or a representation, it is a poor imitation, it is a mockery. The Sumiye artist thus reasons: why not altogether abandon such an attempt? Let us instead create living objects out of our own imagination. As long as we all belong to the same universe, our creations may show some correspondence to what we call objects of nature. But this is not an essential element of our work. The work has its own merit apart from resemblance. In each brush stroke is there not something distinctly individual? The spirit of each artist is moving there. His birds are his own creation. This is the attitude of a Sumiye painter toward his art, and I wish to state that this attitude is that of Zen towards life, and that what Zen attempts with his life the artist does with his paper, brush, and ink.

A line drawn by the Sumiye artist is final, nothing can go beyond it, nothing can retrieve it, it is just inevitable as a flash of lightning; the artist himself cannot undo it; from this issues the beauty of the line. Things are beautiful where they are inevitable, that is, when they are free exhibitions of a spirit. There is no violence here, no murdering, no twisting-about, no copying-after, but a free, unrestrained, yet self-governing display of movement—which constitutes the principle of beauty. The muscles are conscious of drawing a line, making a dot, but behind them there is an unconsciousness. By this unconsciousness nature writes out her destiny: by this unconsciousness the artist creates his work of art. A baby smiles and the whole crowd is transported, because it is genuinely inevitable coming out of the unconscious.

Another feature that distinguishes Sumiye is its attempt to catch spirit as it moves. Everything becomes, nothing is stationary in nature; when you think you have safely taken hold of it, it slips off your hands. Because the

moment you have it is no more a live one, it is dead. But Sumiye tries to catch things alive, which thus seems to be something impossible to achieve. Yes, it would indeed be an impossibility if the artist's endeavour were to represent living things on paper, but he can succeed to a certain extent when every brush stroke he makes is directly connected with his inner spirit not at all hampered by extraneous matters such as concepts, etc. In this case, his brush is his own arm extended; more than that, it is his spirit and in its every movement as it is traced on paper this spirit is felt. When this is accomplished, a Sumiye picture is a reality itself, complete in itself, and no copy of anything else. The mountains here are real in the same sense as Mt. Fuji is, so are the clouds, the stream, the trees, the waves, the figures. For the spirit of the artist is articulating through all these masses, lines, dots, and "daubs."

It is thus natural that Sumiye avoids colouring of any kind, for it reminds us of an object of nature, and Sumiye makes no claim to a reproduction, perfect or imperfect. In this respect Sumiye is like calligraphy. In calligraphy each character composed of strokes horizontal, vertical, slanting, flowing, turning upward and downward, does not necessarily indicate any definite idea, though it does not altogether ignore it as a character is primarily supposed to mean something. But as an art peculiar to the Far East where a long, pointed, soft hair brush is used for writing, each stroke made with it has a meaning apart from its functioning as a composite element of a character symbolising an idea. The brush is a yielding instrument and obeys readily every conative movement of the writer or the artist. In the strokes executed by him we can discern his spirit. This is the reason why Sumiye and calligraphy are regarded in the East as belonging to the same class of art.

That the paper is of such a fragile nature as not to allow the brush to linger too long over it, is also of great advantage for the artist to express himself with it. If the paper were

too strong and tough, deliberate designing and correction would be possible, which is, however, quite injurious to the spirit of Sumiye. The brush must run over the paper swiftly, boldly, fully, and irrevocably just like the work of creation when the universe came into being. As soon as a word comes from the mouth of the creator, it must be executed. Delay may mean alteration, which is frustration; or the will has been checked in its forward movement, it halts, it hesitates, it reflects, it reasons, and finally it changes its course—this faltering and wavering interferes with the freedom of the artistic mind.

While artificiality does not mean regularity or a symmetrical treatment of the subject and freedom irregularity, there is always an element of unexpectedness or abruptness in Sumiye. Where one expects to see a line or a mass, this is lacking, and this vacancy instead of disappointing suggests something beyond and is altogether satisfactory. A small piece of paper generally oblong, less than two feet and a half by six feet, will now include the whole universe. The horizontal stroke suggests immensity of space and a circle eternity of time,—not only their mere unlimitedness but both filled with life and movement. It is strange that the absence of a single point where it is conventionally expected should achieve this mystery, but the Sumiye artist is a past master in this trick. He does it so skilfully that no artificiality or explicit purposeness is at all discernible in his work. This life of purposelessness comes directly from Zen.

6

Having spent too much time on what is known as Sumiye and its connection with Zen, let me conclude this lecture with my little remarks on the spirit of "Eternal Loneliness." I know that my lecture is altogether inadequate to do justice to what Zen has really done in its peculiar way for the esthetic side of Japanese life. So far we can say, Zen's influence in Far Eastern painting has been general, as it is

not limited to the Japanese, and what I have described may apply equally to the Chinese. What follows, however, can be regarded as specifically Japanese, for this spirit of "Eternal Loneliness" is something known only in Japan. By this spirit, or this artistic principle if it can be so designated, I mean what is popularly known in Japan as "Sabi" or "Wabi" (or "Shibumi"). Let me say a few words about it now.

"Sabi" appears in landscape gardening and tea ceremony as well as in literature. To confine myself to literature, especially to that form of literature known as "Haiku", that is, the seventeen syllable poem. This shortest possible form of poetical expression is a special product of the Japanese genius. This made a great development in the Tokugawa era, more particularly after Bashō (1643–1694).

He was a great travelling poet, a most passionate lover of nature—a kind of nature troubadour. His life was spent in travelling from one end of Japan to another. It was fortunate that there were in those days no railways. Modern conveniences do not seem to go very well with poetry. The modern spirit of scientific analysis leaves no mystery unravelled, and poetry and Haiku do not seem to thrive where there are no mysteries. The trouble with science is that it gives no quarter to suggestion, everything is laid bare, and anything there is to be seen is exposed.

We are all made to face so-called hard facts whereby our minds are ossified; where there is no softness left with us, poetry departs; where there is vast expanse of sand, no verdant vegetation is made possible. In Bashō's day, life was not yet so prosaic and hard-pressed. One bamboo hat, one cane stick, and one cotton bag were perhaps enough for the poet to wander about, stopping in any hamlet for a while which struck his fancy and enjoying all the experiences—which were likely mostly hardships of primitive travelling. When travelling is made too easy and comfortable, its spiritual meaning is lost. This may be called sentimentalism,

but a certain sense of loneliness engendered by travelling leads one to reflect upon the meaning of life, for life is after all a travelling from one unknown to another unknown. A period of sixty, seventy, or eighty years alloted to us is meant to uncover if we can the veil of mystery. A too smooth running over this period, however short it may be, robs us of this sense of "Eternal Loneliness."

The predecessor of Bashō was Saigyō of the Kamakura period (1186–1334). He was also a traveller-monk. After quitting his official cares as warrior attached to the court, his life was devoted to travelling and poetry. He was a Buddhist monk. You must have seen the picture somewhere in your trip through Japan of a monk in his travelling suit, all alone, looking at Mt. Fuji. I forgot who the painter was, but the picture suggests many thoughts, especially in the mysterious loneliness of human life, which is, however, not the feeling of forlornness, nor the depressive sense of solitariness, but a sort of appreciation of the mystery of the absolute. The poem then composed by Saigyō runs:

"The wind-blown
Smoke of Mt. Fuji
Disappearing far beyond!
Who knows the destiny
Of my thought wandering away with it?"

Bashō was not a Buddhist monk but was a devotee of Zen. In the beginning of autumn when it begins to shower occasionally, nature is the embodiment of "Eternal Loneliness." The trees become bare, the mountains begin to assume an austere appearance, the streams are more transparent, and in the evening when the birds weary of the day's work wend their homeward way, a lone traveller grows pensive over the destiny of human life. His mood moves with that of nature. Sings Bashō:

"A traveller—
Let my name be thus known—
This autumnal shower."

We are not necessarily all ascetics, but I do not know if there is not in every one of us an eternal longing for a world beyond this of empirical relativity.

When Bashō was still studying Zen under his master Bucchō, the latter one day paid him a visit and asked, "How are you getting along these days?"

Bashō: "After a recent rain the moss has grown greener than ever."

Bucchō: "What Buddhism is there prior to the greenness of moss?"

Bashō: "A frog jumps into the water, hear the sound!"

This is said to be the beginning of a new epoch in the history of Haiku. Haiku before Bashō was a mere word-play, and lost its contact with life. Bashō questioned by his master about the ultimate truth of things which existed even prior to this world of particulars saw a frog leaping into an old pond, its sound making a break into the serenity of the whole situation. The source of life has been grasped, and the artist sitting here watches every mood of his mind as it comes in contact with a world of constant becoming, and the result is so many seventeen syllables of his bequeathed to us. Bashō was a poet of "eternal loneliness."

Another of his Haiku is:

"A branch shorn of leaves,
A crow perching on it—
This autumn eve."

Simplicity of form does not always mean triviality of content. There is a great Beyond in the lonely raven perching on a dead branch of a tree. All things come out of an unknown abyss of mystery, and through every one of them we can have a peep into the abyss. You do not have to compose a grand poem of many hundred lines to give vent to the feeling thus awakened by looking into the abyss. When a feeling reaches its highest pitch, we remain silent, because no words are adequate. Even seventeen syllables

may be too many. In any event Japanese artists more or less influenced by the way of Zen tend to use the fewest words or strokes of brush to express their feelings. When they are too fully expressed, no room for suggestions is possible, and suggestibility is the secret of the Japanese arts.

Some artists go even so far as this that in whatever way their strokes of the brush are taken by the reviewer it is immaterial, in fact that the more misunderstood the better. The strokes or masses may mean any object of nature, they may be birds, or hills, or human figures, or flowers, or what not; it is perfectly indifferent to them, they declare. This is an extreme view indeed. For if their lines, masses, and dots are judged differently by different minds, sometimes altogether unlike what they were originally intended for by the artist, what is the use at all of attempting such a picture? Perhaps the artist here wanted to add this: "If only the spirit pervading his product were perfectly perceived and appreciated." From this it is evident that the Far Eastern artists are perfectly indifferent to form. They want to indicate by their brush work something that has strongly moved them innerly. They themselves may not have known how articulately to give expression to their inner movement. They only utter a cry or flourish the brush. This may not be art, because there is no art in their doing this. Or if there is any art, that may be a very primitive one. Is this really so? However advanced we may be in "civilisation" which means artificiality, we always strive for artlessness; for it seems to be the goal and foundation of all artistic endeavours. How much art is concealed behind the apparent artlessness of Japanese art! Full of meaning and suggestibility, and yet perfect in artlessness—when in this way the spirit of "eternal loneliness" is expressed, we have the essence of Sumiye and Haiku.

7

That the Zen form of Buddhism has influenced Japa-

nese life, especially in its esthetic aspect to such an extent as has never been attained by the other forms is due to the fact that Zen directly appeals to the facts of life instead of to concepts. The intellect is always indirect in its relation to life, it is a generalising agency, and what is general lacks in instinctive force, that is, in will-power. Zen is not solely the will, it contains a certain amount of intellection too, inasmuch as it is an intuition. Standing in contrast to the conceptualising tendency of the other schools of Buddhism, Zen's appeal to life is always more fundamental. This is the chief reason why Zen takes hold so strongly of Japanese life.

The art of fencing, to master which was one of the most absorbing occupations of the governing classes of Japan since the Kamakura era achieved a wonderful development, and so many different schools of it have been prospering until quite recently. The Kamakura Era is closely related to Zen, for it was then that as an independent school of Buddhism Zen was first introduced to Japan. So many great masters of Zen ruled the spiritual world of the time. In spite of their contempt of learning, learning was preserved in their hands. At the same time the soldiers thronged about them, eager to be taught and disciplined by them. The method of their teaching was simple and direct, not much learning in the abstruse philosophy of Buddhism was needed. The soldiers were not naturally very scholarly; what they wanted was not to be timid before death which they had constantly to face. This was a most practical problem on their part and Zen was ready to grapple with it probably because the masters dealt with the facts of life, and not concepts. They would probably say to a soldier who came to be enlightened on the question of birth and death, that "there is no birth and death here, get out of my room, as quick as you can." So saying they may chase him away with a stick they generally carry. Or if a soldier came to a master saying, "I have to go through at present with the most critical event of life,

what shall I do?'' Then the master may roar, ''Go straight ahead, and no looking backward.'' This was the way in feudal Japan the soldiers were trained by Zen masters.

Since the soldiers were constantly threatened as regards their lives, and since their swords were the only weapons that turned their fate either way to life or to death, the art of fencing developed to a wonderful degree of perfection. It is not strange then that Zen had much to do with this profession. Takuan (1573–1645), one of the greatest figures in the Zen world of the Tokugawa period, gave full instruction in Zen to his disciple, Yagiu Tajima-no-kami (died, 1646), who was fencing teacher to the Shōgun of the day. The instructions are not of course concerned with the technique of the art itself, but with the mental attitude of the fencer. To follow them intelligently must have cost a great deal of spiritual training on the part of his illustrious disciple. Another great fencing master of the Tokugawa period was Miyamoto Musashi (1582–1645), who was the founder of the school called Nitōryū. He was not only a fencer but a Sumiye artist, and as such he was equally great. His pictures are very highly valued and have ''Zen flavour'' so to speak. One of his famous sayings on fencing is:

> ''Under the sword lifted high,
> There is hell making you tremble;
> But go ahead,
> And you have the land of bliss.''

Not mere recklessness, but self-abandonment which is known in Buddhism as a state of egolessness (*anatta* in Pali or *anātman* in Sanskrit). Here is the religious significance of the art of fencing. This was the way Zen got deeply into the life of the Japanese people—the life in its various aspects, moral, practical, esthetic, and, to a certain extent, intellectual.

8

This is the gist of Takuan's Zen instruction given to Yagyū Tajima-no-kami on fencing:

"What is most important in the art of fencing is to acquire a certain mental attitude known as 'immovable wisdom.' This wisdom is intuitively acquired after a great deal of practical training. 'Immovable' does not mean to be stiff and heavy and lifeless as a rock or a piece of wood. It means the highest degree of motility with a centre which remains immovable. The mind then reaches the highest point of alacrity ready to direct its attention anywhere it is needed—to the left, to the right, to all the directions as required. When your attention is engaged and arrested by the striking sword of the enemy, you lose the first opportunity of making the next move by yourself. You tarry, you think, and while this deliberation goes on, your opponent is ready to strike you down. The thing is not to give him such a chance. You just follow the movement of the sword in the hands of the enemy, leaving your mind free to make its own counter-movement without your interfering deliberation. You move as the opponent moves, and it will result in his own defeat.

"This—what may be termed the 'non-interfering' attitude of mind—constitutes the most vital element in the art of fencing as well as in Zen. If there is any room left even for the breadth of a hair between two actions, this is interruption. When the hands are clapped, the sound issues without a moment's deliberation. The sound does not wait and think before it issues. There is no mediacy here, one movement follows another without being interrupted by one's conscious mind. If you are troubled and cogitate what to do, seeing the opponent about to strike you down, you give him room, that is, a happy chance for his deadly blow. Let your defence follow the attack without a moment's interruption, and there will be no two separate movements to be known as attack and defence. This immediateness of action on your part will inevitably end in the opponent's self-defeat. It is like a boat smoothly gliding down the rapids; in Zen, and in fencing as well, a mind of no-hesitation, no-interruption, no-mediacy, is highly valued.

"So much reference is made in Zen to a flash of lightning or to sparks issuing from the impact of two flint-stones. If this is understood in the sense of quickness, a grievous mistake is committed. The idea is to show immediateness of action, an uninterrupted movement of life-energy. Whenever room is left for interruption from a quarter not at all in vital relation with the occasion, you are sure to lose your own position. This of course does not mean to desire to do things rashly or in the quickest possible time. If there were this desire in you, its very presence would be an interruption. When it is asked, 'What is the ultimate reality of Buddhism?' the master answers without a moment's delay, 'A branch of plum-blossom,' or 'The cypress tree in the court-yard.' There is something immovable within, which, however, moves along spontaneously with things presenting themselves before it. The mirror of wisdom reflects them instantaneously one after another, keeping itself intact and undisturbed. The fencer must cultivate this."

A life of non-interruption here described as necessary to the mastery of fencing is the life of effortlessness (*anābhogacaryā*), which is the essence of Bodhisattvahood. Artistically, this is the art of artlessness. The Confucians would say, "What does heaven say? What does the earth say? But the seasons come and go and all things grow." The Laotsŭans would paradoxically declare, "Benevolence and righteousness are products of human artificiality when the highest truth no more prevails in its own way." Or, "It is the principle of non-action that makes all things move." Or "Just because the axle moves not, the spokes revolve." All these remarks tend to show that the centre of life-gravity remains immovable and that when this is successfully taken hold of, all the life activities, whether artistic or poetic or religious or dramatic, whether in a life of quietude and learning, or in one of intense action, a state of self-realisation obtains, which expresses itself in a most exquisite manner in the life and acts of the person.

To conclude: the spirit of eternal loneliness (*vivikta-dharma*) which is the spirit of Zen expresses itself under the name of "Sabi" in the various artistic departments of life such as landscape gardening, tea ceremony, tea-room, painting, flower arrangement, dressing, furniture, in the mode of living, in nō-dancing, poetry, etc. The spirit comprises such elements as simplicity, naturalness, unconventionality, refinement, freedom, familiarity singularly tinged with aloofness, and everyday commonness which is veiled exquisitely with the mist of transcendental innerliness.

For illustration, let me describe a tea-room in one of the temples attached to Daitokuji, the Zen temple which is the headquarters of the tea-ceremony. Where a series of flagstones irregularly arranged comes to a stop, there stands a most insignificant-looking straw-thatched hut, low and unpretentious to the last degree. The entrance is not by a door but a sort of aperture; to enter through it a visitor has to be shorn of all his encumbrances, that is to say, to take off both his swords long and short, which in the feudal days a samurai used to carry about him all the time. The inside is a small darkish room about ten feet square, the ceiling is low and of uneven height and structure. The posts are not smoothly planed, they are mostly of natural wood. After a little while, however, the room grows gradually lighter as our eyes begin to adjust themselves to the new situation. We notice an ancient-looking kakemono in the alcove with some handwriting or a picture of Sumiye. An incense-burner emits a smoke of fragrance which singularly has the effect of soothing one's nerves. The flower-vase does not contain more than a single stem of flower, not at all gorgeous or ostentatious; but like a little white lily blooming under a rock surrounded by the sombre pines, the humble flower is enhanced in beauty and attracts the attention of the entire gathering of visitors, four or five especially invited to sip a cup of tea, in order to forget all the worldly cares that may be oppressing them.

Now we listen to the sound of boiling water in the kettle resting on a tripodal frame which is kept over a fire in the square hole cut in the floor. The sound is not that of actually boiling water but comes from the heavy iron kettle, and it is most appropriately likened by the connoisseur to a breeze that passes through the pine grove. It greatly adds to the serenity of the room, for a man here feels as if he were sitting alone in a mountain-hut where a white cloud and the pine music are his only consoling companions.

To take a cup of tea in this environment with friends, talking probably about the Sumiye sketch in the alcove or some art topics suggested by the tea-utensils in the room, wonderfully lifts the mind above the perplexities of life. The warrior is saved from his daily occupation to fight, and the businessman from his ever-present idea of money-making. Is it not something, indeed, to find in this world of struggles and vanities a corner, however humble, where one can rise above the limits of relativity and have even a glimpse of eternity?

Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki